



Klamath Network Featured Creature

March 2007

Rubber Boa (*Charina bottae*)

FIELD NOTES:

General Description:

Rubber boas (*Charina bottae*) are only one of two boas native to the USA, the other being the Rosy boa (*Lichanura trivirgata*). *Charina bottae* is a small to medium size snake whose size ranges between 35 and 84 cm (14-33 inches). Rubber boas can vary in color from olive-green, reddish-brown, black, or tan to chocolate-brown and generally have a yellow underbelly. The boa's blunt tail, lack of an obvious neck, and short broad snout gives the rubber boa a 2 headed appearance (center picture).

Behavior:

Rubber Boas are a docile species that will usually curl up into a ball when approached or picked up. They are a crepuscular (active at dusk or dawn) and nocturnal. The boa's prehensile tail enables it to climb shrubs and small trees. They are accomplished burrowers and can be found in the leaf litter, under rocks or rotting logs, utilizing rodent burrows, and buried in damp sand. They are generally active between March and November and hibernate during the winter months. Rubber boas are ovoviviparous and average 2-8 young born between August and November



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Where to see it in the Klamath Parks:

There is still considerable debate on the validity of 3 subspecies of rubber boa *C.b. bottae* (Pacific), *C.b. utahensis* (Great Basin) and *C.b. umbratica* (Southern California). However, at least one subspecies of rubber boa can be found in five of the 6 park units that make up the Klamath Network. They include Lassen Volcanic NP, Lava Beds NM, Oregon Caves NM, Redwood National and State Parks, and Whiskeytown NRA.



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Feeding:

Rubber boas are small, slow snakes that constrict their prey, so they have a tendency to prefer nestling mammals (voles, mice, and shrews). They have also been documented foraging on eggs, lizards, salamanders, small birds, and bats.

Habitat:

This species is a generalist occupying various habitat types between sea level and 3050m (10,000 feet). *Charina bottae* are not as heat tolerant as many other snakes so they tend to be located in cooler, moist locations such as riparian areas. Habitat types include conifer and hardwood forest, grassland habitats, and shrub covered areas.

Distribution:

Charina bottae is one of the most northern ranging species of boa. It occurs in British Columbia south to southern California and eastward to Utah, Montana, Wyoming, and possibly northwest Colorado. Distributions tend to be spotty on the southern and eastern fringe of their range.

Additional Information:

<http://www.washington.edu/burkuseum/collections/herpetology/charina.htm>

<http://www.rubberboas.com/>